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## CHARLEY FRASER—AN IRISH STORY.

Mr. Fraser was the minister of a little Presbyterian chapel, in a village near Enniskillen. His wife died when his only child was an infant; yet he never thought of marrying again; the village school-master assisting him in teaching, and his faithful old servant in taking care of his son. Unlike any thing one would suppose of "the minister's son," (as he was usually called) was Master Charley Fraser; his bright blue eye was indicative of dispositions different from those which made him the idol of his father, and at once the pet, the pride, and the plague of the village; or, as Sir Walter has it, he was

"While half a plague, and half a pest,  
Yet still endured, beloved, caressed."

Undoubtedly in frolic and fighting, mischief or merriment, Master Charley was supereminent: he was a provoking imp; yet the strong and unjust always feared, and the weak and injured, looked up to him for support. When, as a youth of fourteen, he would, during the sage reproofs of his faults and follies, clap his round cap on the side of his head, place his hand on his side and look bold, his father would be provoked with the swaggering boy; but when he found he had gone a step too far, he would be so penitent and promising, that with all his faults, he contrived to twine round the old man's heart: and while every one cried out at the erring partiality of the parent, every door, and hand, and heart, was open to its object. Some of his young companions envied him—some admired—many loved—and while all blamed, he was "the glass in which all parties dressed themselves." Numerous were the predicaments in which the quiet minister was placed on his son's account; and his congregation often complained that the good man sinned the sin of Eli; for his reproof generally was, in the broad accent of his country—"Eh! Charley, Charley, canna ye have soom discretion in ye, Sir?" But discretion was a quality nature appeared to have left out in the composition of Charley's character.

Among those who oftenest, and most loudly complained of Master Charles Fraser, was a respectable neighbouring farmer of the name of Fitzpatrick; but Mr. Fraser's usual remark on this subject was, "If there was no Ned Fitzpatrick, my Charley would be a better boy."

It was the endless disputes, boxing matches, and continued rivalry of the sons that occasioned the complaints of the fathers. All this commenced at the village school, where Mr. Fraser, to save his own time and trouble, sent his son at the age of six years. Until that luckless day, Edward Fitzpatrick, a boy by six months his senior, had held undisputed sway among its members, whether in learning, or in boxing, or in the minor feats of racing, leaping, &c. On the very first day of his appearance, however, Charley Fraser was placed above him in the class, and while the breast of one child was filled with exultation, the other burned with rage and mortification. Charley was a good-natured little fellow, and he was really sorry when he saw the tears of anger, shame, and bitter pride, standing in Ned's eyes. Ignorant of school formalities, the high-minded boy turned his glistening and glowing face to the master, "let him keep it, Sir—I'll go down—let him keep his place."

"No, no, Master Charles Fraser," said the pedagogue, "those who win should wear."

While Ned dashed away with his hand the tears that in spite of himself would come, he repeated "those who win should wear;" and the words, ill-understood at the time, were never forgotten.

The play-hour arrived; and in the various feats of activity, such as the standing-leap, running-leap, and foot-race, the successful scholar was victorious over the hitherto redoubted Ned. A trial of their skill in boxing was unanimously called for; and with glowing cheeks, and eyes that tried to look stern, the little combatants with clenched fists and imitative postures, steadily regarded each other, with feelings in the bosom of one that were destined to grow in depth and colouring with maturer years. Charley after a short, but stout contest, was again victorious; when his antagonist started up amid the reiterated shouts of applause that rung round the little hero, and fled away, his face covered with blood.

"Stop Ned, stop," cried the victor, "you are hurted, come and let us see—I didn't mean it—indeed, I didn't," cried Charley, as he pursued his crest-fallen companion: coming up with him, as he stooped over a stream to efface the blood, by which his hands and face were stained, he cried, "Ned, you are a good lad! I thought you were going to tell on me."

"Tell on *you*," said Ned, curling his lip, "do you think I'd go to tell my own——" He paused, for he would not say disgrace.—"No matter, Charley Fraser, may be *one* day I'll be even with you."

This childish threat produced another from the equally passionate boy it was addressed to, and so the children parted, Charley wondering Ned "could be so bitter," and Ned nourishing in his breast passions that were to "grow with his growth, and strengthen with his strength."

In the North of Ireland, at the time I speak of, almost every "young man of spirit" was an Orangeman or Ribbonman; and at the age of one and twenty, young Fraser attached himself to the former.—"Never meddle nor make among them, Charley, boy," said the old man, while on one occasion his son stood before an old cracked mirror, twisting an Orange scarf across his shoulder—"it is not Christian work—it is profaning the holy name of religion; keep yourself to yourself, Charley, and ask heaven's mercy on all deluded and ignorant souls."

"You will do that better, Sir; it is your calling, you know; but who do you think gave me this fine scarf?" asked the smiling youth, as, the arrangement completed, he surveyed his person from head to foot, and from side to side.

"I don't know," replied the minister—"Miss Fitzpatrick, I suppose."

"No, indeed," cried the youth, with a repressed sigh, "you know the Fitzpatrick's and I are never very great—it was Miss Manser though." He did not think it necessary to state, that though the latter lady had been the ostensible giver, the former was the actual maker of the scarf.

"Well, well—take the silly rag off ye, I canna bear to see ye in such fooleries—though ye become it well enough," he added with pleased vanity, regarding his handsome and manly son. Charley smiled complacently, as all the good man's other words were lost in the concluding sentence, and carefully folding his scarf, put it into his pocket, and proceeded forthwith across the fields to a large, solitary, dilapidated,

yellow house, where Miss Manser resided. She was a girl of singular and commanding beauty, but with eyes so soft and mild, as to counteract its severity. Young Fraser met her, not as an admirer or lover, but with the freedom of a familiar acquaintance; and in the same manner she laughingly assisted him to re-adjust the scarf. The door opened, and Ned Fitzpatrick entered.

Fitzpatrick was by no means without the personal advantages which made his rival so great a favourite in the country; but then Fraser was a person his countrymen would admire; open-hearted and handed, generous, passionate, rash, good-natured, cheerful, reckless, daring, and gay; while Ned from early habit, perhaps, had contracted a gloomy appearance, was grave, and rather silent, the effects probably of an unpleasant temper which, in Mary Manser's opinion, only resulted from too strong and susceptible feelings. To this latter description of character, his personal appearance was suitable: he was tall and slight, uncommonly pale, with prominent black whiskers; a long nose, and deep, large, and when not irritated, mild looking black eyes. At times, however, (as, for instance, when he came into the parlour of the yellow house, and saw its occupants and their employments) his dark brow would fall heavily, his eyes turned down, and his peculiarly white teeth would be left visible by a slight contortion of the mouth, which had the effect of distorting his whole countenance. He stammered out a few words, and was about to withdraw again: Miss Manser seemed to share his perplexity, but young Fraser appeared totally unconcerned, except that his manner became more reckless and blustering than usual.

"Edward, what is the matter?" said Mary at last; "won't you sit down?"

He stammered out something like the expression of fear, lest he intruded. "Pogh—pogh—man alive!" cried Fraser, untying his scarf, "don't talk such nonsense, sure you know you are welcome."

"Where *you* are master, Mr. Fraser?" returned the other sternly.

"Where and *when* I am master," replied Charley, with one of his boldest and most provoking looks of laughing triumph.

Ned sprang from the chair he had taken, and the look he flung back in return, indicated darker feelings; but Mary approached, and said some few words, that sank the infuriated expression of his face into one of saddened pleasure, and peace might have been restored had not the jealous youth suffered his eye to rest on his fancied rival's brilliant scarf. The reckless Charley saw it, and delighted at any opportunity of tormenting the man who had disappointed the dearest hopes of his heart, he exclaimed with a wicked glance at poor Mary—"You don't know who gave me that, Ned?"

"Whoever she was," said Mary quickly, "I am sure she did not mean you to boast of her kindness."

"Nor will I, Mary," he replied, with a look of meaning understood by her, but mistaken by Fitzpatrick; and shaking hands with her, and cheerily bidding him good morning, the *willingly* thoughtless youth bounded from the door, ran across a couple of fields, and slackened his pace, as he said to himself—"Here now is black Ned, as mad as a March hare, and as jealous as ——." He did not find out a smile, for just then his attention became engrossed by the appearance of a comfortable farm-house, towards which, after a little debating with himself, Charley Fraser directed his steps. It was that description of house, that would seem to say, its inhabitants lived partly in the kitchen, and

partly in "the room," or parlour off it: the latter being on this occasion empty, as he discerned through the window, Fraser passed on to the kitchen door; listened at it some moments, advanced a step within it, at last projected his head beyond the *jaimb*, or screen (a wall built for the purpose of screening the air from the fire) and articulated almost tremblingly, the word, "Ellen."

A young girl sitting near the fire-place heard it, looked round, and sprang over the floor with a cry of "Charley!—I thought I never was to see you again," she added, blushing at her delight.

"Ellen, my own Ellen," said the young man, who was no longer the same seemingly reckless personage he had lately been, while with a tear of undisguised, but unhappy or fruitless affection, glistening in his eye, he hung over the lovely girl. "I have watched long and anxiously to see you, Ellen, but I *could* not come here when your father almost forbade me his house, and your brother acts so strangely by me."

"They *are* unkind to you," said Ellen—"oh! I am ashamed and grieved to know it; but, Charles, you will not for *their* conduct—you will not—give me up?"

"Give you up! oh, Ellen, would that I could rest satisfied that you would not be tempted to give *me* up! Will you promise me, Ellen—but I would not be the ungenerous villain to take such a promise. No, Ellen, my father is poor, yours is rich, and no one can wonder that he would not give you to me. I will go out into the world with only a father's blessing, but they say that blessing sometimes maketh rich;" and in his gayer tones he added, "I may return, Ellen, to *win* and *wear*."

"Ah! Charles, why will you ever talk and act so foolishly to Edward? you know how jealous he is of you, and how these very words provoke him, yet you never seem to mind; and your last threat about Mary Manser, was worse than all to him—I know you were not in earnest, Charles;" and Ellen looked up half doubtingly in his face.

"Pah! as my father says, Ellen, 'trifles light as air are to the jealous confirmations, strong as proofs of holy writ.' I don't care to throw dust in his eyes a little longer, though he does suffer by it, he has made *me* suffer; and now if he thinks I have given you up to try to rival him with Mary, what matter, it may leave us freer: she only laughs at his jealousy, for we understand each other very well; she knows I have no wish to succeed in my mock courtship, and I know that I *would* not if I could, and I *could* not if I would; she loves dark Ned too well."

"She does, and I wonder he is not convinced of it."

"Ah! Ellen, he is not so easily convinced as some others, who believe confidently, what it would be utter misery to doubt."

"I wish Charles," said Ellen, without replying to his last speech, "that you would give up teasing Ned in *this way*—believe me it is foolish, and even wrong."

"He knows the way to make and keep me quiet," he replied, as if, however, there was a feeling of sadness and distress at his heart. "Let him give me my own love, and I will leave him his—ay, Ellen, and even you would never know *how* gladly."

"You will never frighten him into submission, Charles, you only make him hate you more; you know he never relinquished willingly any thing for which you contended—do you remember the boat-race, Charley?—oh! I tremble still to think of that day."

"Ay, that was the day which made me know how well I loved his

sister," said Charles, "for if it had not been for that love, he should have had a swim in Lough Erne."

"Dear, dear Charles!"——

"And then he tore you from me, and—but no matter, he *shall* suffer for it."

"Is this your love for his sister?"

"Hist!" he whispered, as a shadow was seen darkening the window of "the room," the door of which was open, and stooping hastily to answer her pettish inquiry, with a knowing smile and nod, he gently moved her back, and crossing the floor in one light spring, he just got beyond the back door as Edward Fitzpatrick came in at the front one.

It was well for Ellen, that the state of her brother's mind prevented him from closely observing her, so that having uttered by way of salutation that very intelligent question—"Is this you, Edward?"—she was able to compose herself before she came under the observation of her awful brother.

The turf fire blazed up brightly, and its light fell on the clean sanded floor, on the polished "dresser" with its burnished utensils; on the youthful and delicate beauty of the soft-eyed girl, who took her place beside it; and on the dark brow and frowning aspect of the young man, who, thrown back in a large chair of platted straw, usually appropriated to the service of "the master," with one hand plunged within the breast of his waistcoat, and his cravat pulled off, as if to leave his choking breath freer egress, muttered unconscious of his sister's presence—"he join the Orangemen—let him—and if he does—"

"What do you mean, Edward?" Ellen asked, in alarm.

"What! I wasn't speaking to you."

"I ask pardon, but I thought——"

"Oh! don't think as much as you do, child."

The tears which were struggling still in Ellen's eyes, rolled down her cheeks: her brother's heart was not utterly seared against *her*, and leaning forward and putting his hand on her head, he said kindly—"Come, Ellen, don't be a fool—you are always fretting of late—no one knows why—I did not say any thing to make you cry—did I?"

"Oh, no! but——"

"Well, let us have no more *buts*," he replied, suddenly changing his manner and sinking back in the chair—"I tell you, Ellen, that Fraser is a cold-hearted, deceitful villain; he doesn't care a straw for you; it's another way he's looking: don't be thinking any more of the fellow, and you'll get a husband worth a million of him."

Vexed with the whole of this speech, and disgusted with the concluding part of it, Ellen could not even attempt to set her brother right; she moved back her seat, and soon left him to himself. From this time Ned was apparently occupied in a mysterious manner; he was out much and late at night; was often seen with strangers, and seldom among his former companions; in short it was rumoured, that he was inclined to lend his aid to the Roman Catholic party, in case a fight should take place at the Orange procession in the approaching July. It proved to be so; and in the beginning of the fray, Charles Fraser, arrayed in his orange scarf, was called on to defend himself against the sudden and unlooked for attack of the principal leader of the Ribbonmen, who flung himself on him, with more of the fury of personal, than *political* hate: that leader was Edward Fitzpatrick. Astonished at Ned's unexpected championship, and sincerely desirous of avoiding a conflict, the young Orangeman attempted to expostulate. It was

in vain: taunted by his assailant, and in the presence of his party, he could no longer forbear; the contest was too furious to be long, and Ned defeated in the object for which he had bartered so much, sunk in the estimation of his new adherents, and vanquished again by his powerful rival, lay motionless on the ground. The conqueror instantly stooped to raise his unhappy and misguided friend. But his look, which asked forgiveness, was met by a scowl of the darkest hate, and the remaining strength of the vanquished leader was exerted to dash away the offered hand; and then, overcome with the violence of passion, and the bruises he had received, he fainted, and was carried home, while the victor was attended by a concourse of people, who cheered him as he entered his native village. But the triumph was a bitter trial to him; and when passion had cooled, and he thought of Ellen, the first tears that for many a day had darkened his bold and joyous eye, sprang to it—for he had no means of *instantly* removing from her the agony which his misrepresented conduct towards her brother would cause.

The next evening, Ellen Fitzpatrick was sitting alone in the open window of the farm-house parlour, weeping unrestrainedly: a low whisper came along it—"Ellen, dearest, kindest, Ellen—one word." She started, trembled, and stole out of the house. It was Fraser, and he heard with rapture that his opponent was not much hurt, and that his beloved Ellen had not been unjust in her thoughts of him.—Notwithstanding their peculiar situation and long mutual attachment, this was the first time Ellen had ever left her father's door to meet her lover, and before they parted, she pledged herself to meet him at a greater distance the following evening. She did so, in error, unhappiness, and tears.

"I am come, love," said Fraser, "to take my last leave of you—nay, do not shrink so—I did not mean to say my *last*—oh, heaven forbid! but I will go away, I will go *abroad*, Ellen, for a little, and when I have got something to enable me to claim my love, I will return." He paused, for she did not speak, and her slight figure sunk weakly upon his arm.

"My own Ellen, what ails you? speak to me, dearest—speak, Ellen, if you do not mean to set me mad." For both their sakes she spoke too soon.

"Oh! Charley, will you leave me?"

"Never, never, never"—cried Fraser, unable to withstand the tone these few words were uttered in—"never, my own Ellen, nor shall you leave me: my father's house shall be your happy home; he will be your father, and my labour shall not let you want." And the young man, forgetful of all his generous resolves, proceeded to urge an immediate elopement. The proposal at first shocked Ellen; but she listened, and at length consented; yet, as she did so, a thrill undefinable shook her frame, and the very breeze seemed to murmur wo to her, and to him she loved.

"I must go, Charles," said Ellen, in a low voice.

"But you will join me to-morrow evening, love?—it *must* be to-morrow. Just at this hour you will be at the grove, near the yellow house, where the lane runs out on the road—won't you promise me this, dearest?"

She would have pleaded for a little longer time; but he held her hand firmly till a distinct and rapid "yes, yes," was pronounced; and then she ran on some paces, while he stood looking after till the haziness of the night obstructed his view. He turned to go back to the village

which was close by, and thought he heard something stirring at the other side of the hedge—he looked over it, and saw the cattle moving about quietly in the field, and went on his way home.

Young Fitzpatrick had not yet recovered from the effects of the “party-fight,” but his disease was chiefly mental—a prey to the gloomiest feelings—he shunned even the society of his own family. Not many hours previous to that fixed on for the flight of his sister, a man, in a large frize coat, entered the room where Fitzpatrick lay ill at ease, and gazing mournfully upon the setting sun.

“How d’ye find yourself now, Master Ned?” asked the visitor.

Fitzpatrick grumbled an answer, and turned away his head, as if willing to preclude further conversation.

“I wanted to speak a word with you, Sir.”

“Well!” Ned articulated in a discontented tone—“Be quick, if you please, for I am sleepy.”

“Why then, I thought you’d like to be told that Master Charley Fraser is to be off this night with the girl, up at the yellow-house—Miss Manser, they call her.”

With a fearful imprecation, Fitzpatrick started on his elbow; his eyes glared into the man’s face, with the air of one who gave easy credence to a tale that wrung his soul, and stirred up every dark and stormy passion that was there; he leaned over to him, and through closed teeth, and with a look that denounced the penalty of his falsehood, hissed out in a smothered voice, “Is it *truth*?”

“I heard themselves settle it all yesternight, and more by token they have met out there ever since you got your hurt, just at night-fall; for I have been up here every night myself, to try to see how you were, but was afraid of the old master as he doesn’t like *us*. And so last night he began telling her how he’d go abroad, and come back a rich man, and then no one should hinder him of her; and then she made, as if she would faint like, and asked if he’d leave her, and then the young thief that wanted that all the time, swore he would not; and so, to make long story short, they settled to meet to-night at the grove behind the yellow house, and to get out from that upon the road.”

Ned heard all this, for his whole attention was concentrated, and every word fell deliberately on his strained and aching ear; the muscles of his forehead were protruded; his features rigidly set, and when the last word was uttered he sank back, covered his head in the bed clothes, and the groan that was wrung from his oppressed and tortured soul, spoke of mingled passions—rage, envy, pride, mortification. But the better and tenderer cords of his affections were also struck upon: it was the knell of his dearest and longest cherished hopes. He fervently loved Mary Manser, loved her with all the devotion of his fierce and impetuous nature; to her he was not what he was to others; he felt and often blessed the influence that made him experience for a while the happiness of a quiet and amiable mind; and now the belief that the love he looked on as his only hope and happiness was gone—and bitterer, bitterest of all, was given to his rival, to the man he had hated and contended with from his childhood, his whole soul was one chaos of deadly passions. He could have thought of her lost love and wept; for there were moments when his nature was soft, and his heart open to better emotions; but *this* addition to his wrongs converted the tide of feeling into one deep channel of boiling and maddening fury. The foam gathered at his mouth, his eyes rolled in their burning sockets, he writhed in the bed, grasping the clothes as in a paroxysm of deli-



rium, and the blood flowed from his madly-bitten lip. The informant became alarmed at what he witnessed, and began his remonstrance: "Now, Master Ned—Master Ned, now"—but with a bitter curse Ned desired him to begone.

Left alone, he became apparently calm; but in the fixed and darkened glare of his eyes, as they rested upon the opposite window from which the lingering sunlight was hastily departing, the pallid hue of his face, throbbing of his fevered brow, and deathlike rigidity of his features, the spectator might have discovered the formation of a horrible purpose. He rose, swallowed a large draught of whiskey that had been left in his room for application to his bruises; then threw himself down again, and lay watching the advancing twilight.

The deep shade of night had stolen on, ere Ellen Fitzpatrick, with a light step and trembling heart, passed by her brother's door, and left her father's house. Impetuous and passionate young Fraser was, but he was not proof to the voice of conscience: he loved with all the ardency of his character, but even while he congratulated himself on his own success, so unlooked for, so unpremeditated, his heart told him he was wrong, that Ellen was wrong, and that unhappiness in one shape or other must attend the violation of duty on his part, and propriety on hers: still he anxiously awaited the evening, hailed its approach, wished to expedite the hour at which the good minister retired to bed, and having, when it did arrive, joined with him in the family prayer with which the day was closed, and wished him good night, he stole quietly out to meet Ellen Fitzpatrick.

A short time after, a hurried but low knock came to Mr. Fraser's door; the old woman who had been his nurse opened it, and young Fraser, pale and horror-struck, snatched the candle from her hand, and ran up stairs: at the top of the stairs he stopped, for the servant's exclamation made him look at his hands—they were deeply covered with blood; he turned into his own room, instead of going, as he appeared to intend, into his father's, plunged his hands into a basin of water, and was wiping off the ill-washed stains in a towel, when a louder, more eager, and authoritative knocking was heard at the door. It was instantly opened by the bewildered old creature, who stood trembling in the passage, and three countrymen, with eager and important faces, rushed up the stairs, threw themselves on the young man, and before he could have had time to conjecture their purpose, had secured his hands with the towel he held.

"I didn't think we'd manage that so well," said one to another "for Charley was a stout fellow."

Fraser stood as if bewildered.—"What in heaven's name do you mean?" he faltered out at last, while a sickening sensation crept over his heart.

"You murdering villain! do you ask that?" was the reply.

"What! what!"—said a voice at the door of the room, in trembling accents—"what is that they say—what is all this for—are you going to murder us?"

"We are not thinking hurt or harm to you, Mr. Fraser, for you're an honest man, that never meddles nor makes with any one; but as for this young villain, he'll just get, what you yourself would call, the due reward of his deeds."

"My God, support me! tell me, tell me, if you have any nature in ye, what has he done?"

"Nothing, father;" gurgled young Fraser, almost inarticulately.

"Nothing in the world!" echoed the foremost of the party tauntingly, "except murdering poor old Mr. Fitzpatrick, that's all."

The minister stretched forth his arms widely, as if to grasp his son, and with a feeble, but bitter cry, fell senseless on the floor.

"Base, lying, ruffians! how dare ye say such a thing? let me go—let me go to my father!"

"Deed and ye must leave him alone for the night, for it's to Enniskillen jail we must be going with you." They had a struggle for this, however, for bound as he was, Fraser was still powerful.

"Hear me," he cried, while he resisted their efforts to drag him away—"I protest, I am innocent of this."

"Oh! mighty innocent, and we that saw you running from the poor man you had left a corpse, and found you washing his wet blood off your hands."

A full view of his fearful situation seemed now to burst on the young man, and with a hollow groan, and a low supplication to the God of mercy, the God of his father, he ceased to make any further resistance, and let himself be brought away from the house. The magistrate before whom he was taken, received the depositions of the two men, who stated, that having heard the report of a blunderbuss on the farmer's ground, they were drawn to the spot from which they saw young Fraser running; they found Mr. Fitzpatrick lying dead on the path, and without delaying to give his family information of his murder, pursued the prisoner, and apprehended him in his father's house, in the act of washing the blood from his hands, in confirmation of which, the towel that bound them was produced.

Fraser's story was, that he too had heard the report of a gun, but was not alarmed by it, and that walking rapidly along the path his foot struck against a body lying across it; he stooped and raised it from the shadow of the hedge; it was quite warm, and to his horror he found it to be that of old Mr. Fitzpatrick; circumstances conspired to bewilder his mind at the moment, and he had hurried back to his father, in order to procure his assistance; that he was going to his room with this object, when he found the blood of the deceased had stained his hands, and unwilling to alarm a timorous old man, he had gone into his own apartment to remove it, when the men rushed in and seized him. There was not much plausibility in this statement, and the magistrate could not but think so; he knew the wild character which young Fraser bore, and, therefore, inquired where he had been going when he discovered the murder?

Fraser felt how much it must make against him were he to own the truth—"To meet a friend," he replied.

"Who was the friend?" a silence followed.

"I'll tell your honour," said the witness again, "it was young Mr. Fitzpatrick's sweetheart that this chap was going that very minute to run away with."

"That is a lie!" cried Fraser.

"Can you give another explanation, Sir?" demanded the magistrate.

The open countenance of Charley Fraser fell into heavy gloom, as if his condemnation were sealed; he seemed to submit to his dreadful fate, and was silent. The warrant for his committal was made out, and in half an hour's time he was lodged in the jail of Enniskillen.

The morning's sweet and blessed light had not penetrated, with cold and melancholy rays, into the cell that confined the lately buoyant and bounding spirit of young Fraser, when the opening of its door made

him lift his head, and in the grey, dull light, he saw the figure of his always revered, though too often imposed on, father. Poor man! his hair, hitherto dark, had become nearly grey in that one night of intense anguish; his shoulders too were stooped, as if some years had gone over his head rather than hours. He fastened his eyes on the young man, and began, in a forced voice—"Child of guilt"—but nature would have way; the artificial bulwarks he had sedulously tried to draw around his heart, burst at once—"Charley"—he cried, extending his arms—"Charley, the pride, the hope of my old days—is it you will bring me to my grave in shame and sorrow?"

"Sorrow I may bring on you, Sir," said his son rather proudly, "and shame—ay, shame too," he muttered with a fallen countenance, "but *guilt* is not on *my* head!"

"What's that, boy—what's that?" said the old man with some of the imbecility of excessive sorrow stamped upon his face, as he slowly drew nearer to the prisoner. "Did ye say ye were *not* guilty—did ye say *that*? oh! if ye did, and *said it in truth*, say it again—say it again, boy, and the blessing of your old father will be on your head."

"I swear," said the young man solemnly, "in the sight of the God you have served and I have slighted, that I am innocent of Mr. Fitzpatrick's death, and utterly ignorant of its cause." Then turning round in a more energetic manner, he added, "think you I could injure the father of the woman I loved better than life, and all else it could offer?"

This last appeal was unheeded, the minister was on his knees, and plucking his son's arm, he whispered, "KNEEL down, kneel down I say, and let us give thanks to the Father o' mercies, and God o' all consolation."

His son looked at his fettered limbs, his cell of misery, and did not at first comprehend his cause of thanksgiving. He did not know the rapture which an upright mind can feel at discovering that, however, short-seeing man may condemn—the eye to which all hearts are open, sees the object of suspicion guiltless.

Fraser's trial came on, and excited intense interest. The only witnesses against him—and there were none for him—were two of the men who had apprehended him, the third having accidentally met them and joined in the pursuit. They stated the circumstances already detailed without any appearance of acrimony, and with simple perspicuity, and the evidence outweighed that of his own sadly deficient story. When the fatal sentence was pronounced, the wretched father raised his hand, and said, so as to be heard distinctly, "thank God, my son dies guiltless!" and then sunk insensible to the ground.

Charles Fraser, young, gay, happy, eager in the pursuit of life's pleasures, and always thoughtless of consequences, beloved and blamed, admired and envied—died as a penitent sinner should, trusting to the merits of a Redeemer for the pardon of sins he *was* guilty of, owning they were many, but denying with his last breath, the crime for which he suffered. One thing at times distressed him—Ellen Fitzpatrick appeared to forget, neglect or condemn him; of her or from her, he never heard; and latterly he acknowledged to his father that he was glad it had been so, for his thoughts were thus less drawn to the world he was leaving.

We must now return to the Fitzpatricks. Ellen after a long and fruitless expectation of her lover's appearance, and having returned to her home, witnessed its horrors, without immediately knowing how largely she had contributed to produce them. On entering, a tragic

spectacle met her sight ; her murdered father was laid on a table in the kitchen, where the coroner's inquest had just been held : all the windows and doors were open, and the numerous lights glared wildly in the midnight air. She flung herself upon the lifeless body ; her long slight arms hung motionless down at either side, and her hair wet with the dews of night, floated on the bosom of the dead. In a long chair, his face turned to the high blazing fire ; his hands tightly clasped on his knees ; his eyes set on the fiery light that flashed on their darkness ; his white teeth visible, and his colour almost more ghastly than that of the corpse, sat Edward Fitzpatrick ; every nerve seemed strung, and stretched, and strained ; every muscle and fibre was one moment in fearful agitation—the next settled in an ice-bound rigidity.

The man who had given Fitzpatrick the information of the intended elopement, and who had been foremost in apprehending Fraser, now entered, exclaiming, "we have seized the murderer!"

Ned started, grasped the poker, and glared with distended eyes. "Who! who! who!"—cried several voices together.

"Charley Fraser, who else!—Why then, Master Ned, didn't ye know that it was him that *done* it?"

"Him!" Ned ejaculated in a horrible voice, while his eyes rolled in his head, and his lip curled into an expression like scorn : but his grasp of the poker slowly loosened, it fell on the ground, and he dropped back into his seat ; his countenance sunk into a sterner deeper shade, while he muttered—"Can it be—might it be—it *must* be—*him*."

But there was one there who made no comment on the words that had hissed in her ear, withering up the current of her young heart's blood. Ellen rose with the air of one suddenly recalled to life ; her arms fell by her side ; her beautiful hair hung down her icy countenance ; her lips were dissevered, and rounded into an expression of mute and terrific suspense. She did not speak, did not make a single observation on what had been said, but with a low, scornful-sounding sort of laugh, her slight figure worked its way through the crowd with the quickness of thought, and getting beyond it, she flew with unnatural speed to the village, darted within the open door of the minister's house, fell at his feet, and wrapped her arms about his knees. She gazed up in the old man's face with wild and earnest entreaty, but still she did not speak. It was that sight restored him to sensibility, from the state in which his son's apprehension had left him ; he thought then that there *might* be grief even *greater* than his. With the feelings of an utterly miserable parent beholding the equal misery of a child, he put his arm round her neck, and said, "The Lord look down upon us!"

Even these few words broke the spell that bound the wretched maiden's heart ; she rose, and glancing round the room, murmured—"Gone—is he gone? come, come, *my*—*his* father, come quick."

"Whither, child?"

"To the town," pulling his arm, "we will *say* he is not guilty—*guilty!*"—and again she laughed at the suspicion.

The old man raised himself on his tottering limbs—"God bless you, poor child! yes, we will go."

They went out together, Ellen holding his arm, but moving with a rapidity his feebleness was unequal to : her frame seemed to be impelled and animated by an inward emotion, whose workings were not otherwise visible. They had passed the village, and got a little way beyond it on the road to Enniskillen, when the girl was suddenly and rudely seized from behind ; her brother turned her round, and waving his arm to the

minister, led back his sister in silence, leaving old Fraser to continue his sorrowful path alone.

Ned led her on till they came to a large stone by the road side; he placed her sitting upon it, and stood silently before her. She looked up once in his face, her eyes fell rapidly, and a chilly shudder shook her whole frame. "Poor silly fool, what were ye going to do?" he said at last, "to try to clear that treacherous villain, who, while he was giving you fair words, was preparing to take away another—yes, you may look at me, but I tell you that this very night Fraser was to have gone off with Mary Manser."

The full extent of her misery—of all the misery she had caused—now broke on Ellen's mind. She sprung from the seat, and screamed so loud, so bitterly, that with a look of terror, he clapped his hand on her mouth, and pushed her violently upon it again—"Are you mad?" he hoarsely cried—"is *this* news worse to you than all the rest—hold your tongue, and listen to me—swear this moment, and from this hour, you will never mention that man's name; that you will never try to see him, or speak to him, or of him, or attempt to clear him to any one: swear this, or —." He drew a small pistol from his pocket, and held it, without finishing his threat, to her head, repeating in a menacing voice, "swear, it now—at once—at once." He got no answer; again and again, he repeated his threat; and furious at her obstinacy he pulled back her bent-down head: but he dropped it again—it was no longer agitated, there was an air of calmness, of childlike composure over it, that was far more appalling; and stooping lower, he saw by the moonlight that she was drawing figures on her knee with one finger. "Ellen, Ellen, what ails you? oh, heaven be merciful!—speak, speak, Ellen—I was but in jest, speak to your brother—misery, misery, misery—her senses are gone!" He grasped the pistol firmer, and pointed it to his brain; but his hand instantly fell nerveless at his side—though life was truly a burden to him, he dared not to meet his Almighty Judge. He took the unconscious creature home, and there she remained almost always under his eye, for he seemed to fear her attempts to escape from his guardianship; she would sometimes sit gazing vacantly round the room, sometimes a changeless and unmeaning smile dwelt on her pretty and passionless features; then her humour would change, and she would cast quick and wild glances round her, start, shudder, and mutter indistinct sounds. She seemed to like to sit in the wide kitchen chimney, and play with straws, or anything that came in her way. Ned was universally pitied, but the expression of that pity he would never brook; he succeeded in banishing every friend and adherent, and his house seemed still the abode of the dead; he neglected his business, and sat, carelessly dressed and wretched-looking, hanging over the fire sometimes from morning to-night, with his more happy maniac sister opposite to him. Mary Manser would willingly have shared in his care of her, and might have soothed, and perhaps in some degree, restored her mind, but she had been treated in such a manner, as both bewildered and prevented her from again going to Ned's house; and thus he was left without a single alleviation to the crushing weight of sorrow. It was not surprising that the cloud of misfortune which had settled round him, should make him desire to leave the scene of former social comfort, and present lonely wretchedness; but many wondered at the feverish anxiety he manifested to have the sale of his little property completed, so as to enable him to leave the country before the day of Fraser's execution: and still more did Mary Manser, ignorant of

the mistake under which he still was, wonder that all recollection of an engagement of which he once seemed so keenly tenacious, formed, indeed, when they were almost children, but in her opinion still, and always binding, appear utterly lost to him. Mary was an orphan girl, dependant on a poor relation; she had always regarded Ned as her future husband, and from her earliest years was fondly attached to him. While the attentions of Charles Fraser were wholly directed to poor Ellen, there was nothing to interrupt the harmony of their attachment; but when the latter was thwarted in his hopes by the opposition excited through Ned's influence with his father, and had taken a dangerous, and as it proved fatal, method of retaliation, she foolishly united in acting a part that made her lover wretched, and of which she now deeply repented.

Some circumstances, naturally to be expected, interfered to prevent Ned from completing the disposal of his farm and stock, until the very day on which his former successful rival suffered for the horrible crime imputed to him. The door of the farm-house was kept closed all that day, even the servant-maid was sent some where on business, and only his maniac sister was a witness to the manner in which it was passed by Ned. The next morning they both were to leave it; and as evening drew on, and the return of the servant might be expected, the door was opened, and Fitzpatrick had just taken his usual seat at the fire, when the man who had been mistakenly the cause of a great deal of his misery, came in with the usual salutation—"God save all here—God save you, Mr. Fitzpatrick, Sir."

Ned always regarded this man with a dark and horrified aspect; he had expressly forbidden him to come into his sight, and now turned from him, scarcely muttering a reply to his salutation.

"I have a bit of news for you, Sir, if you please."

Ned murmured an imprecation in reply. "Good news, though it makes a wee bit *again* myself," pertinaciously urged the visiter, drawing nearer to him. "Sure I've made out that it wasn't Miss Manser at all, Master Charley that was hanged the day, was to have taken off, but Miss Ellen, the creature there, and I knew it was yourself would be proud to hear it, because of the old liking there was between you—"

Ned, without rising grasped his informant's throat, pulled him down on the hearth, and in another moment would probably have stained it with his blood, had not some strong reaction of the passions paralysed his own powers, and laid him apparently lifeless on the floor. The released man springing to his feet, ran out of the house, stopped for a moment in the next field, to consider what he ought to do, and then hastened on to the yellow house, where he made a disclosure to Miss Manser of his former mistake respecting her, and detailed the fearful effect which an attempt at rectifying it had upon young Fitzpatrick, urging her to go directly to the farm and see if the "poor boy was dead entirely."

From a trance-like swoon, the result of too powerfully excited emotions, Edward was recalled by the words of affection, which came over his rugged and wretched soul like the breathings of sweet and holy music; his first words were indistinct or unintelligible—they appeared to speak of murders and remorse. Mary bathed his temples, repeating only the words, "poor, dear Edward!" The tears gushed out, at first slowly, as if wrung out with difficulty from their burning and dried-up source; but they came more plentifully when he looked up at her, and felt her hand in his, and said, "God bless you, Mary—"

oh ! these blessed tears have cooled my brain, and you alone could draw them—yet why should I be glad ? it were better to be mad at once.”

“ Edward, we have both suffered,” said Mary, for she believed as fond hearts are apt to do, that his present affliction arose from the supposed loss of her affection. “ I was very foolish and wrong, but henceforth we will suffer together whatever we must suffer.”

There came no reply to this speech—Edward sat with his eyes intensely rivetted on her face ; at length he said slowly, as if trying to comprehend its meaning—“ Mary, do you mean—that you would still—still—even *still* be my wife ? ” he added in rapid and hoarse tones.

“ I do, Edward,” she replied in a sorrowful but firm and unhesitating manner.

He groaned loudly, leaned his face on his extended hands, with his elbows resting on his knees, and seemed willing to hide the workings of his mind from the generous and devoted girl who stood before him. The conflict was long and severe, for every lingering remnant of good feeling urged him to reject the self-devoting, but too seducing offer : the man was not equal to such a sacrifice ; it was finally, amid tears and groans unsuited to such a theme, accepted of, and with bleeding, aching, darkened, or happily insensate hearts, the three young people, blighted ere their noon of life, left their native place to go, they scarcely knew or cared whither.

It was known that Ned intended to gain the nearest sea-port, and thence to take shipping either for England or America—all was alike to him. As they passed the beautiful shores of Lough Erne on a hired car, they were momentarily stopped by a scantily attended funeral : with his hair now fully bleached, and his figure entirely stooped, and looks of sorrow, perhaps too of shame, they might scarcely have recognised the old minister who brought to the quiet repose of a burying-place in a little island of the Lough, whose ground had in old time been consecrated, the dishonoured remains of his high-spirited and ill-fated son. They left his dust there to sleep unnoticed, as his name was unhonoured ; but Mr. Fraser even amid the darkness of his age’s sorrow, sometimes looked up to the world of spirits, and when he thought of his penitent and pious death, ventured a hope that when the secrets of all hearts should be revealed, he should see the departed unshrouded from the cloud of guilt and shame that had closed around him here.

The scene was too much for the tortured feelings and guilty soul of Fitzpatrick. His frame became convulsed ; and as if struck by the hand of an avenging God, he fell motionless upon the earth.—He was hastily conveyed to a neighbouring barn, where, after a time, he was recalled to life. But his mind appeared quite unsettled, and he talked wildly of blood and guilt, of judgment and of hell ; and then he eagerly besought those around him to bring a minister, to speak comfort to a guilty and departing soul—some one to whom he could utter the horrible secret which had settled upon his heart.

The grief-stricken father was slowly returning from the melancholy business of death, when he was met by a man who besought him breathlessly to hasten and administer the consolations of religion to a dying man. Mr. Fraser followed :—“ Here is a minister,” said a by-stander, as he entered, “ who will show you the way of peace, which you desire to seek.”

"The way of peace!—ho, ho, ho"—hideously and hoarsely laughed the dying man—"the way of peace!"—he repeated, dwelling as if desirously on the unhappy expression—"ho, ho—let him come close to me, and listen to what I can tell him, and then—ho, ho, ho—then let him show the way of peace!"

Trembling almost to fainting, old Fraser knelt down on the ground, and bent his head over the wretched man, whose eyes were closely shut. "I can't, I can't"—he murmured—"I did long to tell it—but now the time is come, I can't. Well, hush, hush, hush"—he went on as if communing with something unseen—"it must be—right will be right—but put *her* out first; I could not draw her hate on me *at the last*, I won't let her know what I did against her, she was true and faithful to me—but then she thought misery and sorrow, and the world's blight and blast, was *all* I was bringing her to."

The weeping woman was beckoned to withdraw, and when the miserable sufferer, without looking up, began in a low, hurried, and thick voice, his terrible relation, the by-standers listened with absorbed attention; even the poor maniac seemed impressed with the idea that something strange and interesting was going on, for sitting by the door, she leaned forward, a finger pressed on her lips, while with a look of imbecile joy in her pretty eyes, she lowly articulated, "hush!" His voice grew hoarser and hoarser as he hurried on, as if fearing that breath would hardly be given him for the recital; his words sometimes were lost in the huskiness of his throat, and then Fraser, though his lips were blanched, and his thin hair shook with emotion as he listened, bent lower, desirous not to lose a word, and a flush of wondering and unusual energy crossed his pallid features. He heard all—the tale of guilt and of grief was this:—Not many moments after Ellen Fitzpatrick had left her father's house, as described, in order to keep her appointment with poor Charley Fraser, the wretched Ned sprung from his bed, threw on his clothes, grasped a blunderbuss suspended over the chimney, and went out. The morning had been dark and rainy, and though the sun had broken out towards evening, the sky was overhung with clouds from which some heavy drops fell at intervals. The workings of Fitzpatrick's mind were now fatally ended—one deadly object alone occupied it—he might have had a hard struggle *before* it was *fully* formed, but it was now done, and disappointment would be *worse* than its accomplishment; the thought of consequences was, as perhaps it always is in such cases, excluded from the breast which the desire of vengeance only occupied. His ear bent painfully towards the village, listening for the firm, rapid, and joyous step he expected. A step was heard plashing along on the wet path; his grasp of the death-dealing instrument grew tighter—a cloud that moment came over the newly-risen moon; the step came on—he thought not of its sounds; the shade of a tall figure was directly before him, outside the hedge that concealed his own; he fired—a cry, a groan for an instant was heard, and all was still. But that cry had in it something more than commonly terrific to the murderer's ear, for it syllabled his name, and that in accents different from those whose pleadings for mercy might have been momentarily delicious to the revengeful spirit; he sprang through the hedge, lifted to the light of the cloud-struggling moon the face on which death that instant set its seal, and saw it was his father's! He fled away across the fields. Life now would be even gladly resigned, for he thought of no curse superior to a miserable existence; but the dread of man's hate, of the



murderer's doom—now first reflected on—of a parricide's memory—these were terrible: impelled by the mere instinct of self-preservation, he rushed on to a deep small pond, and buried in it the fatal instrument he carried; then with the speed and heart of a murderer, fled back to the house that had been his father's, entered it unnoticed, tore off his clothes, and sprung again into the bed where he was found by those who came to break to him the horrible tidings of his father's murder. He steeled his heart against Fraser's unmerited death, by the belief that he was guilty of the only crime he could impute to him, that of stealing away the affections of Mary Manser.

The voice of the guilty man was hushed in coming death; his lips still moved, but they gave no utterance—and his strained, but sightless eyeballs were fixed upon the face of him, whose interest in his tale he knew not. Every power of the poor old minister seemed lost in one intense and all-absorbing feeling, which at length broke forth in the grateful cry—"My God, thou hast justified my boy!" and he then sunk senseless on the ground; while, as if restored to life and strength, the dying man sprung upright in the bed, glared wildly on his prostrate confessor, uttered a wild and bitter cry, and sunk back, never to breathe again.

From the time the body of the wretched Edward Fraser was interred without attendants, in the next church-yard, no one ever heard of the once beautiful Mary Manser. But Ellen never left Mr. Fraser. He took her to live with him on the beautiful shores of Lough Erne. One day he brought her to the Island tomb, and made her speak out a name she had not for years heard or uttered, for even in madness her brother's cruel injunction had been remembered. She repeated it several times, mused on it, and shed tears, the first she had shed since the frightful night that had cost her her reason. From that day her mind had undergone a change; and although she was timid, and her manner and look continued always singular and rather wild, she ceased to be called a maniac. To all, gentle as a lamb; to the old minister kind, affectionate as a child; he taught her to look up above this troubled world, and dwell on the hope of another; and the winter of his age was cheered, and his withered heart felt again almost a father's fondness.

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#### LINES,

#### WRITTEN ON THE APPREHENDED LOSS OF BEAUTY.

What is beauty? But a flower,  
Early victim of decay,  
Which the moment of an hour  
Either gives or takes away.

Like the sunbeam on the fountain,  
Where its light hath dauncing shone:  
Like the roebuck on the mountain,  
Here a moment—pass'd and gone.

Though the moonbeam should be shaded,  
Softly still the night-wave heaves;  
Though the rose's hue be faded,  
Fragrance hangs around its leaves.

So, though beauty's bloom may perish,  
Though its earth-born glory dies,  
Yet the heav'n-taught soul will cherish  
Brighter blossoms for the skies.